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## <cn>14. <ct>‘Don’t you know that it’s different for girls’: A dynamic exploration of trust, breach and violation for women en route to the top

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Despite a plethora of programmes and policy interventions over the last forty years, there has remained a dearth in the progression of women into leadership of organizations. The limited transcendence of women into senior roles shows stubbornly similar results across different sectors, different industries and different countries. While many firms have an increasing number of women in their graduate intake, it is striking that little has happened to dent both the comparative speed and volume of men’s progression into elite leadership positions. In the face of this ongoing gender disparity many nations have sought ways to try and redress the imbalance through the introduction of remedies including changes to governance and legislative quotas for women (Terjesen and Sealy, 2016). In addition to attention regarding the under-promotion of women to boards, there is increased recognition that this is a more ubiquitous issue that stems from the under-representation of women in other leadership positions (Hampton-Alexander review, 2016). Moving the current focus from elites to attention on the role of women in management and leadership more generally makes more transparent how efforts over the last decades to introduce ‘female-friendly’ policies, such as flexible working and shared parental leave, while somewhat improving the retention at work of women with children, have failed to deliver the projected enhancement of progression rates for women per se. Indeed studies report a clear time-lag of around eight years in the delivery of more inclusive and diversity-focused policy, but more tellingly a particular resistance in male-dominated organizations (Kalysh et al., 2016). What is the impact of this lag? Further, there is a growing challenge to the current dominance of agentic leadership,

which now appears antediluvian in the face of critical shifts towards more consultative and collaborative approaches to leadership, behaviours more strongly associated with women leaders (Eagly and Carli, 2003; Rosette and Tost, 2010). In these ways the current myopia against women as leaders serves neither individuals nor organizations well.

This chapter considers the fresh perspective of the dynamics arising from accumulated experiences of women during the employee life-cycle (Searle and Skinner, 2011) and their impact in progression into leadership. We outline the distinct micro-aggressions experienced by subordinate women employees, coupled with the evident divergence between rhetoric and reality of ‘equality of access’ in their navigation to the top of organizations, to contend how this might accumulate to create a pernicious and insidious decline in many female employees’ organizational psychological attachment. Using a lens of trust dynamics, we explore the impact of women’s organizational experiences in trying to reach the top, to contend that psychological contract breaches and violations are distinct for women and might significantly transform trust to distrust, changing the retention of the female in the talent pool for elite roles. We outline evidence of gender differences in human resource (HR) policies including recruitment and selection, reward and recognition, and career progression to produce negative psychological contract violations that produce sensebreaking (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016) anchoring events (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010) that undermine individuals’ psychological attachment (Ng, 2015). We commence this chapter by considering what is organizational trust and psychological attachment; we outline the importance of HR processes in organizational trust, before exploring breach and violation. Then we review evidence that reveals different treatment of women compared to men to highlight how women’s psychological attachment to an organization and a profession can decline. We illustrate our arguments for how women’s experiences differ from interviews with women working in a global professional service firm.

## <a>HRM AND TRUST

Trust is a component of psychological attachment to an employing organization.

Psychological attachment refers to the degree of bonding with organizations, and includes a nomological net of three distinct but closely related dimensions of organizational identity, commitment and trust (Ng, 2015). Our use of the term here positions organizations as crucibles which contain both individuals' career identities as well their psychological employment relationship.

Organizational trust is defined as 'a psychological state that compromises the willingness to be vulnerable based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another party' with vulnerability a function of the (inter)dependence and the risks that arise making the situation trust-relevant (Weibel et al., 2016, p. 3). Organizational trustworthiness is a multi-dimensional perception derived from two distinct aspects (Searle et al., 2011): the first element is concerned with the organisation's competence and ability, and the second with its goodwill intentions, as demonstrated in the showing of respect and care about the welfare of employees. Further studies have found a gender difference to organizational trust levels, with women indicating higher levels than males (ibid).

An important means of an organization signalling both of these elements of trustworthiness is found in their choice of human resource management (HRM) policy (Searle, 2018), such as using robust, well-validated processes, such as assessment centres rather than graphology for selection. The types of 'bundles' of HR processes can reveal whether a workplaces is focusing on influencing its employees' motivation and commitment as found in the decision to use 'high commitment practices' (e.g., Whitener 2001), or whether its efforts are directed more towards enhancing their skills and productivity through selection of 'high performance systems' (Appelbaum et al., 2001). Further, HR managers' policy choices reflect their willingness to accept the organization's vulnerability towards their staff,

as such demonstrated in decisions to make more investment in training for staff who may stay or choose to leave (Tzafrir, 2005).

#### <a>BUILDING TRUST

A candidate's first step to show they trust in an organization is clearly demonstrated in the submission of a job application providing a physical manifestation of their acceptance of the risks and vulnerabilities associated with starting a new employment relationship (Searle and Billsberry, 2011). Individual differences factors, such as propensity to trust, play a role at the onset of new employment, but diminishing over time as new employees settle in to trusting (van der Werff and Buckley, 2014). The action of applying for a job is based on positive expectations of the employing organization, and signals the start of the development of a psychological contract, which sadly appears to be more typically violated (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). Breaches are not unexpected as new employees have limited insight derived from the choices of HRM policy, and both elements of the aforementioned gleaned from interaction with recruiters. However, these may be very different people from those whom new employees work with and for.

Justice is an important antecedent of both organizational trust (Searle et al., 2011), and also trust in managers (Colquitt and Rodell, 2011). In organizational settings, perceptions of all three forms of justice – procedural, distributive and informational – play important roles in competence-based trustworthiness perceptions helping to allay employees' uncertainty, while goodwill trust derived from the quality of interactions creates norms of exchange processes (Colquitt et al., 2012). Justice, however, appears to be more central at the start of new relationships, and is then replaced by a more habitual response of trust (Lind, 2018). Significantly, perceptions of organizational justice vary with both gender and ethnicity, with white males experiencing their employing organization as far more fair than either white women or members of minority groups (Mor Barak et al., 1998).

Trust levels are arguably at their highest at the start of a new employment relationship, with the speed of their subsequent decline determined by the combination of the level of initial trust coupled with the degree to which expectations are not met (Robinson, 1996). Together these can mediate the impact of psychological contract breach and the subsequent level of contribution made by the employee to the organization. Psychological contract research has tended to focus on current relationships, but studies show that those who have experienced a prior psychological contract breach are more likely to experience subsequent violations (Robinson and Morrison, 2000). The intensity of breach experience varies, but becomes more emotionally intense where the violation is deemed to have been intentional, and the treatment received unfair. The elements surrounding a breach are important in determining the salience of the memory, transforming experiences into anchoring events that guide individuals' subsequent decisions and actions (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010). These anchoring events are distinct types of memory due to their negative affective tone and the threatening content which makes them more easily accessible than other types of memory. They can produce profound chains of events that create legacies in organizations (Morgeson et al., 2015). Negative experiences create three forms of impact: a direct impact for those who are the target, but also a vicarious impact for those who observe or learn subsequently about what has occurred, and an ambient impact that can permeate across the whole organization where poor behaviour taints the entire working environment (Robinson et al., 2014).

Despite insight into breaches, little attention has been given to how employees respond to and recover from such violations. Conceptual work has examined post-psychological contract breach to identify three potential trajectories that might occur following such experiences. These include: a return to the original status quo; a transition to a new and altered contract; or its dissolution into a less functional state (Tomprou et al., 2015).

In the next section we briefly explore a further aspect of psychological attachment, namely organizational identity, to provide illustration of how female employees' identity is more likely to be challenged and threatened in male-dominated workplaces. We highlight the divergence in fairness and injustice levels to make the case that the perception of breach is different for women, both in terms of its frequency and the types of violations women are exposed to, which trigger more profound sensebreaking and sensemaking experiences regarding their identity as leaders compared to that experienced by men. It is through such processes that talent pipelines to elite roles become corroded, undermining organizational trust, identity and thus psychological attachment to the employing organization, and also spilling over into the career.

#### <a>ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY AND SENSEMAKING

Organizational identity is the extent to which employees regard themselves as informed by their employing organization (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). The construction of work identity is multi-faceted, comprising individual but also social components (Searle, Nienaber et al., 2017). It represents a sense of oneness with an organization (Ng, 2015), which is achieved through deep-level and ongoing psychological processes, rather than occurring at a more surface level (Rousseau, 1998). Those who are more defined by their career are orientated more towards an identification that is derived from aspects including job success, advancement and status, while those with more social identities commence with an emphasis on collective advancement progressing identification with their group that informs their subsequent level of organizational identification (Searle, Nienaber et al., 2017). Further, where identification levels are high, so trust levels are also raised (Vanneste et al., 2014).

Organizational identity is achieved through continuous processes of sensemaking and sensebreaking (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). Individuals do this by utilizing clues and signals they extract from the workplace to define both who they are, but also who they are not

in a continuing process until a more stable and satisficing self-concept is achieved (Brickson, 2005). Experiences of breach can produce intense negative affect, creating a disjunction between what was expected and considered 'normal' and what has been experienced (Robinson and Morrison, 2000). This disjunction creates a surprise that is important in triggering a necessary psychological process of conscious sensemaking (Louis, 1980). Sensemaking processes can occur at an individual level, but are also found at the social level such as around shared experiences, which require meanings to be reframed by drawing on others' experiences, interpretations and frames rather than just that individual's per se (Jacobs and Keegan, 2016). Central to these processes of sensemaking is the employee's search for explanations to provide a better understanding of the nature of the potential threat (Bartunek et al., 2011). In this way the cognitive process of sensemaking permits better coping through reducing uncertainty (Gioia and Thomas, 1996 ).

Long-standing research attests to the conflicting identity of women as leaders that makes it clear that both breach and the resultant sensemaking are more likely to occur for women who want to become more senior. For example, the enduring male bias of 'think manager, think male' (Schein, 1973, 2007), is found to still skew leadership towards masculine traits and thus men, resulting in female applicants either being passed over for promotion, or subject to far greater scrutiny than their male counterparts in demonstrating their suitability for such roles (Powell and Butterfield, 2017). Clearly both of these outcomes create a different experience for women seeking to progress their careers than men. Further, meta-analysis confirms role incongruity (Eagly and Karau, 2002) in which contextual factors push against the acceptance of female leaders in male-dominated contexts (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). In addition to the lacuna found in the identity of women as leaders per se in male-dominated professions and organizations, a far greater identity challenge is evident among black women (Fearfull and Kamenou, 2010), who are more likely to respond

to challenges by trying to protect or restore their identity (Atewologun and Singh, 2010). Situations, however, which threaten individuals' identity cause far more powerful existential challenges triggering an ongoing and far more substantive sensemaking process (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Examples of this lack of gender fit in leader identity are illustrated in the quotes below from women in a global professional service organization:

<quotation>I couldn't find anyone else in the firm that was doing the role in the way I thought I would want to do it.</quotation>

<quotation>There's only, until very recently, really two female directors in the whole of this area nationally.</quotation>

While studies have shown that there is a gender divergence in perceptions of justice for workplaces (Mor Barak et al., 1998), there is growing evidence of gender difference in the mistreatment of women and members of racial minorities, with women exposed to far more incivility and harassment in workplaces than men (Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2013; Rotundo et al., 2001). Research shows that there are differences in the types of mistreatment targeted at women such as sexual misconduct, which appears to be occurring across all kinds of sectors, and especially targeting younger female subordinates (Searle, Rice et al., 2017).

Further, the way HR policies themselves operate may also have gender skew, showing men are less frequent recipients but also paradoxically better insulated by their employing organizations than women (Kath et al., 2009). More specifically a recent meta-analysis examined the differences in workplace mistreatment including bullying, discrimination, harassment and incivility in terms of gender and race (McCord et al., 2018). This study focused on mistreatment, which included demeaning or humiliating behaviour targeted against an employee but also that motivated either due to gender, or race. It confirmed that women perceived greater levels of sex-based mistreatment (sexual discrimination and sexual harassment) compared to men, and also more general harassment, discrimination and incivility than men. Further the results reveal that despite policy directed at reducing sexual



harassment and discrimination at work there has been little decline in their frequency.

Likewise race-based mistreatment was more common as a form of mistreatment amongst non-white populations.

These results show that men have equal or better treatment in workplaces than women. This finding implies that not only is there less necessity for sensemaking from men but also that the sensemaking of both women and racial minorities includes a collective dimension, i.e., there is an identity-threat component to their mistreatment that arises *because* they are a woman or non-white. Critically, studies of incivility contend that the impact of such experiences becomes magnified when it is framed as being gender-focused (Ferris et al., 2017). In this way there appears to be an insidious undermining of women at work that is different from that experienced by their male counterparts. Over time, an accumulation of direct, vicarious and ambient experiences is likely to reduce substantially trust levels amongst women, but also their psychological attachment to organizations through challenging their identity and reducing their commitment to their profession and employing organization. In the next quote a white woman recalls her recent selection experiences, to reveal this gender-based framing, which positions this as an unfair organization which will not treat her fairly nor progress her at the same rate as her male colleague due, not to her lack of ability, but her gender:

<quotation>At that level promotion it's more about hours served, as long as you're good enough, it's about hours served, and there was no question that it was a question of ability, but there just can be favouritism and I don't think people realize that they're doing it. So there was someone in the [other location] team who'd been in the role less time than I was but got promoted first, which sounds silly, and it niggled me at the time for quite a long time and it took a long time to just accept it. So he was promoted eighteen months ago now to manager, so ahead of me, even though I know from feedback I was good enough and he'd been in the job less time. He's actually just gone up again, but actually what changed quite a lot was my view on it because when he got promoted ahead of me to the manager I was like 'I know I'm good and I know he's been there less time than me, and it is that hours served

promotion for manager anyway.' I raised it with my boss and he was like, 'yeah, but apparently he's a superstar, he is based in [other location] so the director there thinks his amazing.' 'I was like, why don't you think I'm really good enough?' It's very much there's favourites in a team which are obviously going to be boys because, and that's my biggest bug-bear with it at the moment but it's something subconscious. So that was it my realization that you just need to accept some things you can't change. Because I was surprised at how I was so upset last time when I knew that, and people working for me said to me, 'it's not fair that you've been ignored.' People above me were saying, 'it's not right, we know it's not right.' I was so upset, and this time I've just been a bit like, whatever. It's funny how, I've got a really good team and I've got a really good boss as well, but there are certain things that people do subconsciously and you just have to accept it. Particularly if you're working in a male dominated environment, I'm lucky to have as forward-thinking a team as I do. My HR lead at the time took me into the room and she said, 'I'm really sorry I have to tell you this. I know you're not going to like it and it doesn't reflect on the fact that we don't think your bad, it's just the person pushing for him in [other location] said that he was going to leave if he didn't get promoted and he's determined. The director in [other location] wanted him to go up, and I know that it should have been you next in line and I'm sorry.' And that was the problem, that director was insistent and my director just wouldn't shout up for me not because he doesn't think I'm good, just because we're not pals in the way that the guys in [other location] are.</quotat

This quote illustrates how in becoming leaders women have to contend with two mutually incompatible gendered beliefs: first as a group women are expected to have a distinct style to leadership that marks them out as different from male leaders (as noted earlier), but their ascent to their positions is predicated on demonstrations of toughness and competitiveness (Ellemers et al., 2012). These two factors can produce internal dissonance for women which is likely to jar with their prior identities to produce a 'sensebreaking' process which results in an intense divestment from the organization (Ashforth et al., 2014), a liminality (Beech, 2011).

In the next section we consider key HR processes of recruitment and selection, and then reward and recognition to further evidence the differences in experience for female employees.

#### <a>SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

The choices of recruitment and selection processes send important signals to candidates about an organization (Searle, 2018). Importantly, evidence shows that more sophisticated approaches to selection, such as assessment centres, are not only more reliable but also more fair methods for women applicants (Dean et al., 2008). Although studies of leadership selection have found women can perform better in interpersonally orientated dimensions (communication and social interaction), and in areas such as drive and determination (Anderson et al., 2006), their selection to and the evaluations they receive of their performance demonstrate prejudice due to role incongruity factors, especially within male-dominated leadership organizations (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

Recruitment and selection are HR process which offer a significant context in which both the employing organization and the applicant can gauge each other's trustworthiness, and the ensuing trust can meaningfully alter the decisions made (Klotz et al., 2013). During selection, initial clues about trustworthiness from recruitment information combine with information ascertained about fairness from the recruitment process itself, to alter subsequent trust levels and influence applicants' decisions (Celani et al., 2008). While organizations with gender diverse leadership communicate a positive reputational message into communities and investors about their competence (Francoeur et al., 2008), these signals can also influence applicants' attraction. Studies show that organizations that are perceived to be more inclusive and to offer a better chance of progression are more attractive to female applicants (Olsen et al., 2016). However, evidence of gender difference has identified the pernicious effects of stereotypes. Thus, while female leadership

candidates themselves underplay their experiences and competences, failing to take credit for their successes, their assessors are also more likely to be more harsh in rating female applicants for these roles (Heilman, 2001). In trying to overcome these obstacles women can try to become more active in their self-promotion, yet such efforts may backfire with those women who adopt a more masculine style risking being regarded as less likeable and consequently less likely to be hired (Rudman and Phelan, 2008). Indeed, this study compared candidates using the same scripts to reveal how women who behaved in agentic ways are regarded as less competent and likeable than men. These results imply that the perceptive trustworthiness of such candidates appears to be reduced. A further area of discrimination that arises in male-dominated organizations is directed at could-be leaders, who are women with children, who face further particular stigma in their efforts to become managers (Kalysh et al., 2016).

In these high stakes situations the integrity of recruiters and hiring managers can be more closely scrutinized by applicants, with breaches that occur due to promises made during recruitment being extremely resistant to subsequent repair (Tomlinson and Carnes, 2015). Thus, while efforts have been made to enhance the fairness of selection processes, there are other hidden factors that conspire to create a very different experience for female applicants. These are more likely to give rise to perceptions of having been unjustly excluded or disadvantaged due to their gender and thus thwarted in their efforts to navigate into more senior roles.

#### <a>REWARD AND RECOGNITION

A further important and accumulative way that trust appears to be threatened for female employees follows directly from selection, related to experiences of reward and recognition, particularly in the setting and negotiation of salaries and bonuses. Women start their careers on less pay due to workplace biases (Belliveau, 2011). Research from different countries

attests to the ongoing and insidious gap in the remuneration for women and men, with males not only earning more in the same roles, but also advancing quicker than their female counterparts into senior management roles (Blau and Kahn, 2007)). These experiences undermine the trust of female employees in their employing organizations due to perceived violations in both distributive and procedural justice. This divergence is exemplified in results of a large-scale natural field experiment which confirmed that women were more likely to be willing to take a lower salary for their work, and were also far less likely to negotiate for a higher salary (Leibbrandt and List, 2014). The reason for this reluctance emerges from evidence of the backlash against assertive women who ask for a pay rise, with male colleagues less willing to work with them (Rudman and Phelan, 2008); as before this backlash is only found against women (Amanatullah and Tinsley, 2013). Indeed, the level of backlash against women becomes more amplified as they rise through organizations (Lyness and Judiesch, 1999). Research, however, shows women are prepared to and do more actively negotiate where there is a strong signal that this is expected (Leibbrandt and List, 2014). Thus negotiation is something women can do, but based on the signals they receive that this is acceptable. In this way women are more sensitive to the context and the importance of fitting in to avoid the aforementioned perceived penalties.

A further distributive injustice that arises is the type and size of reward package offered to women in top positions compared to their male counterparts. Studies reveal that male directors are offered far larger amounts, which are also more likely to be linked to the organization's performance (Kulich et al. 2011). Further, charismatic male leaders are also likely to receive additional bonuses (Kulich et al., 2007).

Many organizations actively seek to avoid revealing breaches in distributive justice through the operation of wage secrecy clauses (Colella et al., 2007; Kim, 2015). Where such policies are used, large gender differentials are evident. While differentials in pay rates in

themselves do not generate perceptions of unfairness where the reason for such differential is felt to be fair, variability in pay levels between those doing comparable jobs does raise the need to justify such variance (Shaw, 2014). Where the reason for pay differences appears to be legitimate, productivity and workplace safety have been found to increase, while non-legitimate differentials are found to produce a decline in overall organizational performance (Frederickson et al., 2010). Indeed, a study in the UK by Aspire (2014) found a gender-related pattern to levels of ‘corporate quitting’ due to unresolved difference in pay for female employees.

Studies of gender pay inequality indicate the complexity of these anomalies which can mask the true level of the gender pay differentials in organizations. One of the key challenges here is the entire question of what constitutes equal pay. This is positioned as a multi-faceted issue as the recent BBC presenter pay scandal revealed, making the direct comparison between individuals’ tasks difficult. While pay transparency is designed to try and close the differential between women and men, there are subtle drivers to pay differentials that require further attention into the reward structures of organizations.

Evidence shows direct discrimination in the salary and rewards given to women and men, even those doing the same work (De la Rica et al., 2010; Kulich et al., 2011). There is also an equivalent inequity found for those who are not white that again further disguises the true extent of this direct form of discrimination (Brynin and Güveli, 2012). Second, job evaluation schemes also include gender bias (Gilbert, 2005; McShane, 1990). For example, the increasing use of broad-banding in job and pay structures makes comparison between roles difficult, thus inequity is concealed. Salary level and the other components of reward are connected to the process of negotiation in workplaces, and as noted earlier, men who more actively engage in these practices are thus able to achieve higher levels of pay and other rewards, while women who do engage in negotiations become victims of the aforementioned

gender stereotype backlash (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013; Bowles et al., 2007). Thus there are distinct gender-related rewards and penalties from the same actions.

The type of work undertaken in organizations is also subject to gender differentials with a reduced level of remuneration between the sexes and particularly for female-dominated occupations (Brynin, 2017; Brynin and Perales, 2016). Further, attitudes towards competition and preferences against risk-taking underlie many of the less lucrative career choices of women (Charness & Gneezy, 2012; Marianne, 2011). In addition, the progression of women is often blighted due to stereotypical assumptions that women will have children and hence used to defend blocks to progression opportunities and in the justification of non-legitimate pay progression differences (Nadler and Stockdale, 2012). Yet at least 40 per cent of women employees do not have children, and thus asymmetries in rewards for women are often connected with other issues of intersectionality (Atewologun et al., 2016).

#### <a>CAREER PROGRESSION

Women are attracted to organizations that they perceive as more inclusive and with better chances of progression (Olsen et al., 2016). In some organizations there can be favourable progression for capable applicants, with a more evident lacuna only becoming apparent as they try to transition from middle management to more senior roles. Paradoxically at these middle management levels there can be a bias towards women candidates. In contexts that are less male-dominated, women who demonstrate competence benefit from stereotypes which enhance their perceived ability to work more cooperatively with others and in motivating their staff. However, progression to top roles places greater emphasis on agentic skills including competitiveness, decisiveness and ruthlessness, and so these opportunities become more skewed towards male applicants (Rudman and Phelan, 2008).

A further restraining factor to these elite roles arises from a more hidden issue, that of gatekeepers. Gatekeepers for top roles have enormous influence in determining who is

deemed trustworthy and who is considered a risk (Doldor et al., 2016). These perceptions are used to shape shortlists, the result of which is an exclusion of women by virtue of their different networks and thus social capital (Fitzsimmons and Callan, 2016; van den Brink and Benschop, 2014). There is more attention in these roles paid to the progression of careers, with influences from birth creating not only important but cumulative restrictions to women's progression both into the CEO role, but also in the range of opportunities that are made open to them (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014). These often relate to the distinct accumulation of capital throughout a women's career, placing her at significant disadvantage compared with male counterparts. The perception of women on boards subjectively depresses company stock prices despite positive objective performance metrics (Haslam et al., 2010). Yet objective measures of organizational performance and the composition of their boards show the positive impact of female talent (Post and Byron, 2014), especially regarding corporate responsibility and governance (Adams and Ferreira, 2009; Galbreath, 2011). Sadly, women are often only recruited to lead failing organizations (Ryan and Haslam, 2007, 2009). Thus women face greater risk of failure and criticism due to leading in more precarious positions (Haslam and Ryan, 2008).

Women's ascent into senior roles requires the navigation of complex organizational systems, which often have inherent contradictory signals (Eagly and Carli, 2007). In the next quote, we see a woman's surprise at two levels: as she fails to get the promotion for a job that she is doing well, and her realization and frustration that this rejection was due to her failure to play the game rather than her ability. She goes on to describe this turning point for her in changing her identity and how she passes on her learning to her mentee. In this way we see how learning is shared between women:

<quotation>I'd been a senior manager for so long I just thought it was a shoe-horn into director. I felt as though I'd been acting the role. I had to go through panels, went to London for a three partner panel who just didn't really get what I did, being two of them were London partners and one was a North



partner but worked on very large clients, so I don't think they understood my market and they failed me, which was total devastation. The week later, the North partner that did fail me actually said, you'll easily get it next year there's a technique to the panels and I'm happy to coach you, but she really frustrated me because I thought, 'well if I can do the job but I'm missing out on a technique, what is it?' So I guess for me I did – whereas I'd just assumed I'd naturally get promoted because of my ability, feedback, that I'd proven myself, I was horrified that actually there was a technique to passing the process and actually that made me then think, 'right well I'll make sure I can do this' and I did. And it was, it was absolutely there's a whole thing about, and I do it a lot with [name of mentee] the whole leaning in and the sitting straight, and the going to the front of the conference and being heard. So it sounds really sexist I know, but being a bit more like a man.</quotation>

## <a>CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted how women's experiences of organizations are different from their male counterparts'. We have reviewed research examining gender dimensions to three key HRM processes: recruitment and selection, reward and recognition, and progress, to outline how and why women's experiences of navigating to senior roles can be characterized as less just, and more challenging to their identity as a leader than for their male counterparts. We highlighted the roles of distributive and procedural injustices in producing triggers to sensemaking which can undermine female talents' psychological attachment not just to their employing organization, but also to their profession. Further, we have identified how women have more exposure to, and less buffering by, organizations in incidences of incivility, discrimination and harassment, which when framed as gender-related can amplify their impact on the twin mechanisms of sensemaking and sensebreaking. Thus women are both more likely to be direct targets, but also vicariously and ambiently affected by incivility due to its generalized gender dimensionality. Further we contend that these context factors are likely to be more magnified within male-dominated workplaces, in which women face not just typical issues arising from stereotype threats and backlash against them as leaders, but additional challenges by virtue of the male majority not only failing to perceive the

organization as unfair, but also because they are likely to place less value on policies designed to enhance inclusion and diversity. We argue that through adopting a more dynamic approach throughout the employee life-cycle these accumulative experiences and the resultant sensemaking and sensebreaking around anchoring events is exposed. We identify that these events are likely to have distinct and insidious undermining impacts for female talent, with the potential to derail their drive to achieve elite roles. Thus we propose through this lifespan perspective an agenda for further attention on exploring the distinct differences that women face as they seek to progress to the top of organizations.

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